



Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center
Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center
3701 Loop Road, East
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35404

In Reply Refer To: 679/PO

June 13, 2019

FOIA Request No.: 19-07305-F

Jasper Craven
MuckRock News
411A Highland Ave
Dept. MR 72797
Somerville, MA 02144

Dear Mr. Craven:

This letter is the initial agency decision to your May 6, 2019, request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, submitted to Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center for a copy of "Communication between [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center in Alabama, and representatives from Tonix and Otsuka Pharmaceuticals between Jan. 21, 2017 and present day. Email accounts for these two companies may end in: @otsuka-us.com, @tonixpharma. com. Key words may include: "PTSD," "partnership," "trial," "Cohen," "Trump," "White House," "meeting" and "talk." Your request was received by my office on May 15, 2019.

[REDACTED] did a search for documents responsive to your request. The search was conducted by searching and gathering all files and documents in physical and electronic for associated with [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center in Alabama, and representatives from Tonix and Otsuka Pharmaceuticals between Jan. 21, 2017 and present day. Email accounts for these two companies may end in: @otsuka-us.com, @tonixpharma. com. Key words may include: "PTSD," "partnership," "trial," "Cohen," "Trump," "White House," "meeting" and "talk.". Documents totaling 68 pages were responsive to your request.

My review of the documents revealed that they contained information that falls within the disclosure protections of FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6). FOIA Exemption 6 permits VA to withhold a document or information contained within a document if disclosure of the information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of a living individual's personal privacy. Stated another way, VA may withhold information under FOIA Exemption 6 where disclosure of the information, either by itself or in conjunction with other information available to either the public or the FOIA requester, would result in an unwarranted invasion of an individual's personal privacy

without contributing significantly to the public's understanding of the activities of the federal government.

Specifically, the information I am withholding, as indicated on the enclosed documents, under FOIA Exemption 6 consists of the names and titles of individuals that has communication pertaining to the information you requested; as the individuals associated with this information have a personal privacy interest in it.

The coverage of FOIA Exemption 6 is absolute unless the FOIA requester can demonstrate a countervailing public interest in the requested information by demonstrating that the individual is able to provide the requested information to members of the general public and that the information requested contributes significantly to the public's understanding of the activities of the Federal government. Additionally, the requester must demonstrate how the public's need to understand the information significantly outweighs the privacy interest of the person to whom the information pertains. Upon consideration of the materials provided, I have not been able to identify a countervailing public interest of sufficient magnitude to outweigh the privacy interest in this case. The individuals associated with this information have a personal privacy interest in information that outweighs any public interest served by disclosure of their identities under FOIA. Consequently, I am denying your request for this information under FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(6).

If you disagree with my determination to withhold the information under FOIA Exemption 6, please be advised you may appeal to:

Office of the General Counsel (024)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420
Email: ogcfoiaappeals@va.gov

If you should choose to file an appeal, your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted no later than ninety (90) calendar days from the date of this letter. Please include a copy of this letter with your written appeal and clearly state why you disagree with the determinations set forth in this response.

You may also seek assistance and/or dispute resolution services for any other aspect of your FOIA request, excluding the release determination, from VHA's FOIA Public Liaison and or Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) as provided below:

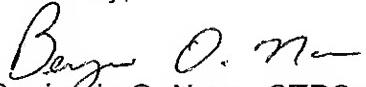
VHA FOIA Public Liaison:
Email Address: vhafoia2@va.gov
Phone Number: (877) 461-5038

Office of Government Information Services (OGIS)
Email: ogis@nara.gov
Fax: (202) 741-5769
Mailing address: Office of Government Information Services
National Archives and Records Administration

8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001

Thank you for your interest in VA. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Michael Culver, FOIA Officer at (205)-554-2885.

Sincerely,


Benjamin O. Nunn, CTRS, JD
Privacy/FOIA Officer